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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/17/2015
TAGS: [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: DISAPPOINTING FIRST DAY'S TURNOUT IN UAE'S IRAQI
OCV REGISTRATION

REF: A) ABU DHABI 35 B) 04 ABU DHABI 4714

[11](#). (C) Summary: The first day of Iraqi out-of-county voting registration (OCV) ended on a low note, with only about 1,000 people showing up at registration tents in Abu Dhabi and Dubai on January 17, according to an IOM staffer in Dubai. Registration will continue through January 23, with polls open from 8 am to 5 pm daily. The Iraqi Embassy remains optimistic that registration will increase significantly over the Eid al Adha holiday. End summary.

[12](#). (C) An MOU authorizing an OCV program in the UAE on January 2 established voting centers in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (ref.A). The UAE is the only location in the Gulf where out-of-country voting will take place. The centers are staffed by international, Iraqi, and local officials and are operating without UAEG interference. However, the UAEG is providing security protection to deter any incidents at the centers by election opponents. Despite this, one of the IOM's OCV coordinators in Dubai, Filippa Neave (strictly protect), reported that only about 1,000 Iraqis presented themselves at the two centers on the first day of registration. This is a disappointingly low number, she said, considering that the IOM estimates that approximately 100,000 Iraqis live in or near the UAE. Of that number, the IOM estimates that roughly half may be eligible to vote, and approximately 20-40 percent of that number (10,000-20,000) are expected to register. Neave blamed poor publicity leading up to the event as part of the reason why so few people showed. She also said that holding registrations over the Eid holiday was poorly planned, and would likely result in an overall low turnout.

[13](#). (SBU) An Iraqi Embassy contact was more optimistic about the registration turnout. First Secretary Sabah Al Wali said registration events were going [fine](#) when he visited the Abu Dhabi registration center on January 17. Admitting that turnout was somewhat low, however, he opined that this was

due to the fact that it was a workday and people were not able to leave work and go to the center to register. Al Wali predicted that many Iraqis would register over the Eid holiday, since they would not want to pass up the opportunity to choose their next government and improve their lives. He did say, however, that he did not expect many Iraqis to travel to the UAE from other Gulf countries to register and vote. This was due, he said, to financial constraints and difficulty getting visas. (Note: On December 29, MFA Assistant U/S for Political Affairs assured PolChief that the UAEG would provide every potential voter with whatever assistance necessary, including the issuance of visas. End note.) Al Wali said he was impressed with the security provided by the UAEG, and felt certain that there would be no incidents.

¶4. (U) The local media quoted Iraqi expatriates in the UAE who rejected the claim that only Iraqi Shi,as were enthusiastic about the election. One person at the Dubai registration center told Khaleej Times newspaper that any Iraqi Sunni Muslim who shunned the January 30 ballot in Iraq would be doing so only because of fear of the anti-U.S. insurgents responsible for the ongoing violence in Iraq. Another Iraqi at the center, a female doctor who is a resident of Canada, refused to state to the reporter whether she was Shi,a or Sunni, saying that she was a Muslim and an Iraqi, and registering to vote was the chance of a lifetime. The doctor said she extended her visit to the UAE until the end of the month in order to be able to vote.

¶5. (SBU) We will provide another OCV update next week.

¶6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
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